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THE UNTRIED CIVILIZATION

By
JOHN WILLIAM FRAZER

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To my Father

The Rev. John Stanley Frazer, D.D.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	NOTE	7
	INTRODUCTION	9
I.	THE MEANING OF CIVILIZATION	13
II.	WHAT IS MODERN CIVILIZATION?	29
III.	THE TEMPER OF THE TIMES	45
IV.	A DEFINITE TYPE INEVITABLE	57
V.	IS CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION PRACTICAL?	73
VI.	CHRISTIANITY THE WAY OF PROGRESS	100
VII.	THE DIVINE RIGHT OF THE CHURCH	118

NOTE

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J. W. F.

INTRODUCTION

THE thesis of these essays is that Christianity, so far from being merely a private mysticism, is at once a plan and a power for the salvation of humanity alike from individual sin and social chaos. The communal redemption of mankind—nothing else or less—was the vision in the mind of Jesus, and the world to-day, well-nigh bankrupt, will never be solvent until it has the wisdom and courage to make trial of his leadership.

Either Jesus was a dreamer of impossible dreams or he saw straight; and if his vision was valid, to reject Christianity as the public policy of the world means that the race will drift from one disaster to another. It serves no good purpose to call him "Lord, Lord," if we do not, or cannot, obey his commands. It is admitted that Christianity is difficult, but not more difficult than the present policy of the world. It is, in fact, an Untried Civilization, and since no one

can say that our present civilization is a success, it is time to consider whether or not Jesus was right; and if so, whether we can translate his proposal into reality.

As such these essays—more suggestive than exhaustive, and as lucid in style as they are thoughtful in treatment—are a token of the times, as showing the increasing emphasis upon the gospel of the Kingdom, the discovery of which was a trophy of the Great War. They are an example of the reverent and clear-sighted thinking of a large and gallant company of young preachers in all communions, who are beginning to see what Jesus actually meant, and are resolved to preach his larger gospel with gentle but relentless insistence in the days that lie ahead.

Of old, in the gloaming of the day, the risen Christ "made as though he would have gone further," but his disciples were too sad-hearted to follow. Once again, in our troubled day, two ways are set before us: either we must follow Jesus in his divine adventure or turn away from him. Both ways are difficult, but one is hopeless; and

the author bids us accept the call of Christ as a challenge to the insight and heroism of Christian faith and enterprise.

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON.

New York City.

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF CIVILIZATION

Words gather about themselves various meanings. Civilization is a term of elastic variability. It has at least three distinct historical meanings. When the idea of culture is lengthened to cover a considerable period of time, or broadened to include a large social unit, it is expressed by the word civilization. In this sense the word "civilization" is simply the expansion of the idea of culture. Thus we speak of a community, a nation, or an age as being civilized. Man reacting upon his environment has produced tremendous results—houses, machinery, governments, social institutions, science, literature, philosophy, religion. This mighty and ever-increasing result we express by the term "civilization." This is the most comprehensive use of the term. As such it is a vast linguistic storehouse into which have been poured the wealth and the

rubbish, the trash and the treasures of all ages. The sense in which the word shall be used in this discussion is a third, and perhaps its most common use. By civilization, in this use, is meant the dominant ideal or characteristic of an age or a people. If this use of the term is more restricted than the others, it is also more definite and workable. By the civilization of an age is here meant its chief quality, that which molds it into a type of life.

History devotes the major part of its attention to three distinct and unique types of civilization: those of ancient Greece, Rome, and the Hebrew Commonwealth. These nations are the most conspicuous examples of the types which they represent. The Golden Age of Greece was the most æsthetic and intellectual period of human history. Art, poetry, philosophy were its grand achievements. The artistic structure of Hellenistic culture was fashioned on the ideal of intellectual beauty. Quinet, in his Génie des Religions, says that the Homeric poems became "the Book of the Law for the Hellenic peoples, so that Homer became for

them what Moses was to the Hebrews. Never again shall we see a society regulated on the plan of an epic . . . Greek society, in fact, tended by constant approximation to form itself on the ideal of the Iliad and the Odyssey . . . Greece was not untrue to the image that had thus been revealed to her; on the contrary, she made of the poem a truth, of fiction a reality." This age of intellectual power and wondrous beauty gave to the world a literature which has been the inspiration of all subsequent literary achievements, a philosophy which furnished hypotheses to all later philosophic speculation, a language which is still the most perfect flower of human speech and the most flexible medium of human thought.

The conspicuous element in Roman civilization was political majesty. It was not colossal barbarism hiding its massive figure under the purple robe of luxury. The civilization of the Roman world was as thoroughgoing as it was imposing. Its ideal was the domination of the world, not merely by force of arms, but by the superiority of Roman political science. Roman civilization

typified its matchless genius for government. Over the vast domains inhabited by subject peoples, the strong arm of Roman authority maintained peace and order, a peace which though secure was rarely oppressive, an order which though imperious was usually tolerant. Citizenship under Rome carried with it both protection and dignity. The Roman scourge could not be laid on the back of a Roman citizen. In Jerusalem when the magistrates "had laid many stripes" upon Paul and Silas, Paul complained to the keeper of the prison that they had been illegally punished: "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans." Justice for the Roman prisoner was furthered by a provision which allowed him a "final appeal" to Cæsar. Roman civilization was preeminently executive, legislative, and judicial. The civilization of ancient Rome was the embodiment of the majesty of law.

The ancient Hebrews present a civilization as distinct as it was exceptional. The Jewish ideal of civilization was a race governed directly by Jehovah. The attribute

of Jehovah which chiefly impressed them was his holiness. To maintain uninterrupted communion with Jehovah the people were taught to emulate his holiness. To the degree that they succeeded would they receive counsel and protection from Jehovah, and so fulfill their national destiny, a destiny to which Providence had ordained them. They were an "elect people," whose motto was "Holiness unto the Lord." The most direful calamity would be for Jehovah to "hide his face from them." In every adversity—defeat in battle, pestilence, drought—was seen the frown of their Deity, a frown in which they saw reflected their own shortcomings. Never was there a race to whom religion was so objectively realistic, who were so conscious of the presence of God, and who sought so earnestly to understand and obey the divine will. Hebrew civilization was ancient man's most serious and morally successful attempt to interpret his relation to his Creator. With the Jewish people the ideal of greatness was Godlikeness. Their greatest achievements were religious achievements, their greatest men were their

religious leaders, the center of their national life was the temple. It is not a miracle, therefore, that Hebrew civilization was the fountain head from which have flowed the strongest and purest streams of religious inspiration which have blessed the world. There is no marvel in the fact that a people bent on learning the realities of life should be the discoverers of a moral realm into which other people had never penetrated, and should transmit to the future a code of morals which is the basis of the race's highest ethics. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that Jesus Christ was a Jew? What wonder that out of the soil from which sprang the spiritual giants of the world in the fullness of time God should more completely reveal himself in a member of their race? The characteristic of Hebrew civilization was a genius for religion.

In Palestine, Greece, and Rome developed the civilizations which are the distinct and representative achievements of the human race, distinct in that each became a type, representative in that all ideas which other races present are included in one or the other

of these great historical civilizations. Each antecedent or subsequent historical civilization has been an approach or a reproduction of the Hebrew, Grecian, or Roman ideal. All that was of real worth in the ancient Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations was included and purified in Hebrew history. The religious traditions and moral discoveries of those ancient peoples, instead of being lost as their historical epochs came to an end, were appropriated and developed by the Jewish people. Stories like the Fall of Man, The Flood, the Tower of Babel—ancient man's explanations of his relation to the universe —became lessons of great spiritual worth when interpreted in the light of Hebrew idealism. Moral achievements like the Code of Hammurabi were transformed into finer standards of conduct after being purified by the white flame of Hebrew ethics and shaped into the Decalogue of the Old Testament. Religious institutions, subsequent to Hebrew national life, which grew about pure ethical ideals, like the social life of the Essenes of the first century and the Puritan

movement of the seventeenth century, were the reappearance upon the surface of history of the clear stream of old Hebrew morality. The splendor of Hebrew civilization was the white gleaming light of pure morality, a morality whose fundamental precept was, "Thou shalt not be defiled." If it was moral isolation, it was at the same time moral sanitation.

Hellenistic culture is at once the climax and inspiration of the artistic and intellectual ideal of civilization. The intellectual activity of the pre-Grecian world was never powerful enough to shape any era into a predominantly intellectual age. Likewise, the intellectual movement which followed the Golden Age of Greece received its impulse from Hellenistic learning. The Renaissance was the effort to grow Grecian culture on the soil of fourteenth-century Europe. It was the lingering sunset of Hellenistic civilization. Florence, under the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent, was an imitation of the Athens of Pericles. While, like all imitations, its splendor was more glittering than golden, still it was an appreciation of the

most cultivated people whose achievements have adorned the earth. In Romola, that splendid portrayal of Florentine life of that day, George Eliot describes how the enthusiasm for Greek literature had spread to all classes, the barbers discussing Greek poetry with their patrons while performing their tonsorial duties. With the debatable exception of the Shakesperian dramas, the great poetry of eras later than Greece's Golden Age are the literary offsprings of the Greek poets. Virgil's "Æneid," Dante's "Inferno," Milton's "Paradise Lost" are the children of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" unto the fourth generation; while Sophocles's "Antigone," and Æschylus's "Prometheus Bound" have progenies too numerous to mention. Goethe, Schiller, Keats, and Shelley drank deep from the springs of Hellenistic lore. Kant, Carlyle, Montaigne, Emerson are the philosophic descendants of the broad-browed Athenian.

Mediæval Christianity, which developed into its most imposing form under the pontificate of Gregory VI, was neither an original nor a Christian type of civilization.

It was the reproduction of Roman civilization wearing the robes of Christian nomenclature. The crusades were the reacting of imperial Roman's military campaigns, inspired by a romantic religious delusion. The mailed knights were unconscious mimics of the Roman legions. A resurrected Roman empire was the ambitious dream which made Napoleon crucify Europe on the calvaries of Wagram, Linden, and Arcola. Germany's militaristic frenzy was the flaring up again of Rome's old dream of world dominion, even the head dress of the German soldier being an imitation of the helmets of the men who crossed the Rubicon with Cæsar. Nietzsche's "Superman" is the old Cæsar worship, thinly disguised. What is civilization? History has three disinct and independent answers: the Hebrew ideal of morality, the Grecian ideal of culture, the Roman ideal of power.

Christian civilization is an unrealized dream, an ideal which has never become a historical reality. Such is not to deny that the Christian religion has been expressed in individual lives and historical movements.

P. Carnegie Simpson, in his book The Fact of Christ, portrays his conception of a Christian as one who is responding to whatever meanings of Christ are, through God's Spirit, being brought home to his intellectual or moral conscience. This approaches a very satisfactory definition; it is exhaustive enough to include the essentials of personal Christianity, and workable enough to be used as a measure of the Christianity of the individual. Judged by this definition, there have lived on this earth persons who have measured well up to the standard. Christ has never been without his true representatives since he vanished from the eyes of men in the glory of Olivet. These are the lights which for eighteen centuries have saved the race from spiritual darkness. They are the nobility of the kingdom of God, the stars in Heaven's Service Flag, the salt of the earth which has kept it from falling to pieces of its own fetidness.

"Saints of the early dawn of Christ,
Saints of Imperial Rome,
Saints of the mart and busy streets,
Saints of the modern home,

Saints of the soft and sunny East,
Saints of the frozen seas,
Saints of the isles that wave their palms
In the far Antipodes,
Saints who were wafted to the skies
In martyr's robes of flame,
Saints who have graven on men's thoughts
A monumental name."[1]

But the continuous presence of individual Christians on earth does not argue a Christian civilization. Christianity, whether expressed by the individual or the group, has ever been at variance with the world. The Christian has never been typical of any civilization in which he has lived. He is not a product of any historical civilization, but, rather, a transplanted plant whose vitality is such that it will flourish in any soil. Of such the Master's words have ever been true: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Whenever the Christian has sought to conform to his age, like Demas, he "has departed, having loved this present world." The real moral and spiritual rela-

[1] "The Facts of Conversion," George W. Jackson. By permission of The Fleming H. Revell Publishing Company.

tion of any individual Christian to his age is expressed by the petition of Jesus: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." Christian people with reference to every age in history since the first century have been "they of Cæsar's household," idealists who of necessity maintained commercial and political affiliations with society, but whose real interests were apart. A true disciple of Jesus is no more a product of the world of yesterday or to-day than was Saint John an embodiment of decadent Judaism, or Saint Paul of the Roman empire. The follower of the Man of Galilee has ever been a stranger and pilgrim on earth, wistfully looking "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." So will he continue to be until the dream of a Christian civilization becomes a social reality.

As Christianity has succeeded with the individual, it has also succeeded in projecting itself through numerous groups and frequent historical movements. It would be a poor assumption to contend that any well-known religious movement or organization is

a complete interpretation and representation of the life and teachings of the Son of man. Commenting on Jesus's words to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," Renan, in his work The Life of Jesus,[1] says: "The day on which he uttered this saying he was truly the Son of God. He pronounced for the first time the sentence upon which will repose the edifice of eternal religion. He founded the pure worship of all ages, of all lands, which all elevated souls will practice till the end of time. Not only was his religion on this day the best religion of humanity; it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have inhabitants gifted with reason and morality, their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed near the well of Jacob. This sentence of Jesus has been a brilliant light amidst the gross darkness; it has required eighteen centuries for mankind —nay, an indefinitely small portion of mankind—to become accustomed to it." Christianity is too profound to be understood

[1] By permission of Little, Brown & Co.

fully by any one group of men, too vast to be compassed by any one movement.

But if churches, reformations, revival movements have been only "broken lights" of the Central Sun, they at least have often been true and kindly lights. Beyond dispute there are important phases of Christianity which groups and movements have faithfully portrayed. The Franciscan movement was the emphasis on the social ideal of Christianity. Monasticism was the exaggeration of Christ's teachings concerning unworldliness. The Wesleyan movement was an earnest, and by no means unsuccessful, effort to reproduce Pentecost by making religion a personal experience. Quakerism was the attempt to express Christ's teachings on the simple and wholesome beauty of friendliness. It does not discredit the church that no one denomination adequately represents the Christian religion. By many men, by various movements, by different denominations—each in a measure independent of the others, like the unknown miracle worker of the Gospels—different aspects of the truth were revealed until the essentials of

the gospel of Christ have come to the knowledge of men. But when all credit is given where credit is due, when all has been said that can be said of the use which the world has made of Christianity, with profound reverence for those holy lives which are "Christ in miniature," and deep respect for every organization and social influence of which Jesus Christ has been the inspiration, still it is painfully apparent that Christianity has never molded any age into a Christian civilization. Looking backward we fail to find a chapter on Christian civilization written by the achievements of the past. Looking about us in the present, we discover that in the fabric of modern life only here and there by broken threads can we trace the influence of Christian ideals. Looking forward, what do we anticipate? For what may we hope?

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS MODERN CIVILIZATION?

Having referred to the conspicuous epochs of history with a view of clarifying the definition of civilization, we may turn to our own age with the question, "What is modern civilization?" What are the conspicuous traits of our times? What character is the present generation giving to the age in which we live? How will the historian of the future label the civilization of which the man of to-day is the type? An objective answer is readily found. Modern America! Whatever the character of modern civilization may be, America is its most representative national type. Our country is the most typical and cosmopolitan nation on earth. It is a cross-section of the modern world. The United States of America is the twentieth century nationalized. To know the controlling force in American life

is to have a key to the meaning of modern civilization. What is the American ideal?

These are questions which are not readily answered, questions which perhaps are not yet ready to yield an answer. The threads woven into the intricate fabric of modern life are of such variety of shade and color that it is not easy to determine its prevailing color. We hear so many voices, each claiming to be official, that we are uncertain as to whose is the authoritative voice. A multitude of preachers are proclaiming, but whose voice is the voice of the age? There are so many strong and apparently unrelated forces pouring into the channel of modern civilization that the most careful observer is uncertain as to the direction of the main current, or whether there be a main current. There are so many clashing ideals, each assuming the championship of the truth, that we are at a loss to recognize the representative ideal.

During the early days of the war prophecies were rife proclaiming the beneficent effect of the world conflict upon contemporary society. It was said that the war was a

school wherein humanity would learn at last a hitherto neglected and unforgettable lesson. Moralists argued that the present generation, having witnessed the collapse of a civilization built on the foundation of commercialism, would rebuild modern life on the basis of ethical fundamentals. The pulpit, assuming the role of the prophet—without the prophet's vision—pointed to a coming revival of religion which was soon to sweep over the race, carrying away the chaff and leaving the sweet, wholesome grain of true and undefiled religion. The widespread fellowship of suffering was diagnosed as the birth pangs of a regenerate humanity. Above the flames of battle was seen the vision of a nobler manhood, crowned with a spiritual halo. Scores of volumes were written on the contribution of the war to Christianity. Phrases were coined and eagerly caught up by visionaries, showing that the men who had been in battle had undergone a fiery baptismal regeneration. Preachers waxed eloquent on "The Religion of the Soldier" and "The Christianity in the Trenches." We saw men throwing their

fortunes and lives into the roaring furnace of war with an abandon that was magnificent. We felt sure that by such costly refining process the dross of human nature was being consumed, and that out of the flames would come the pure ore of Christianity. Rudyard Kipling, whose fame does not rest upon a friendly feeling for Americans, declared as we entered the war that America had found her soul. Lord Northcliffe, commenting upon President Wilson's speech before Congress in which he voiced our country's declaration of war, said that never before had a nation entered into war on grounds so purely idealistic. Many believed that the war was a fierce but purifying flame which would renovate the race. It was confidently asserted that all superficiality would be burned away, and that the near future would be translated into an age of spiritual realism.

Alas! We have been woefully deceived. If the war has had an ennobling influence on the man of to-day, it is not apparent. If society has been renovated, the results of the cleansing process are not strikingly obvious.

If humanity to-day is wearing the sackcloth of penitence for past sins and follies, like Jehoram when Benhadad besieged Samaria, its sackcloth is hidden. If a universal revival of spiritual religion is at hand, its approach has not been heralded by tongues of fire or mighty rushing winds of idealism. We still await the impressive spectacle of vast throngs taking the kingdom of God by violence. However the war may have improved the maps of Europe and Asia, its beneficent effect on the individual and society as a whole seems to be more imaginary than real. Now that the war is behind us, what has become of the religion of the soldier? What spiritual contribution is being made by the man whom the war metamorphosed into a saint in khaki? Has the fine idealism of a nation which "found its soul" been conserved? There is abundant evidence that all of the old has not passed way, and that all things have not yet been made satisfactorily new. Apparently, the only effect of the war on human nature has been to magnify and draw in sharper contrasts different human types. The

money-worshiper displayed himself as the "profiteer"; the sensualist plunged into an orgy of dissipation; the spendthrift revelled in unchecked prodigality; while the idealist proclaimed more insistently than ever that man cannot live by bread alone and has steadfastly refused to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. The war did not materially change modern society as much as reveal the kind of ideals which make up our civilization.

The complexity of modern life lies in its expression of ideals rather than in the variety of its ideals. Every phase of activity in the modern world—social, political, scientific, religious—is consciously or unconsciously a manifestation of one or two masterful ideals of life. The *ad infinitum* of the plural number would be taxed to catalogue the performances of our age; the dual number is sufficient to classify its ideals. One of these may be represented by the greatly overworked and often wrongly used term materialism. The legitimate use of this word is not to make it a synonym of the sneer of the impractical religionist at commercial success

or mechanical progress. In its broader and proper sense it is that philosophy which seeks the ultimate worth of life within the sphere of the senses, and denies any reality beyond the horizon of the physical universe, an interpretation of life which is of the earth most earthy. Wherever it has touched, it has befouled humanity. Its measure of business success is not the kind of service rendered, but the widest margin of profits. The materialist's ideal of an educational institution is a factory which turns out human parts to fit into our great commercial machinery rather than a school which makes for manhood and develops personality. The materialist supports reform movements, like the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks and injurious drugs, not from altruistic motives and conscientious convictions, but because habits that impair the body and cloud the brain weaken the links in the industrial chain. A decade ago W. L. Watkinson, an eminent English clergyman, complained of the Temperance Movement in England that the inconvenience and costliness of it were the chief

items of consideration, and that a favorite argument in this crusade was the financial gain of sobriety. Not infrequently the materialist is a stanch church member who, if unconscious of the spiritual significance of the church, is astute enough to perceive that such an institution restrains lawlessness and furnishes additional police protection to his bonds and warehouses, and on the whole helps to make the city a comfortable and secure place in which to live. The so-called failure of the church—a failure more to its credit than discredit—is, to a large extent, its refusal to conform to standards of worldly success.

"Suggestions are being made," writes Dr. J. H. Jowett in an American religious periodical, "on every side as to how the decrepit weakling, the church, can be revived and recover a vigorous health and strength. And here are some of the suggestions: Permit smoking in the back pews! Let the services share the character of the free-and-easy services of the hut life at the front! Shorten the sermon! Abolish the sermon! Bring the entire service within the compass of an hour,

or better still half an hour! Make use of the cinematograph! Don't be afraid of the drama! Etc., etc." All of which simply means: Convert the altar into a stage and the chapel into an amusement hall! It is sensualism inserting itself into institutional Christianity.

In social life this materialistic ideal reveals itself as a sort of twentieth-century epicureanism, without the refinement of the Epicureans. It is witnessed in the laxity of standards of conduct, the flexibility of moral convictions, the playing of fast and loose with the marriage bond, the popularity of vulgar amusements, the loss of reverence, the mood of trifling with holy things, reckless indulgence stimulated by a mad chase after purely physical sensations. It is the mimicry of the court life of Belshazzar. Ancient Babylon in the most voluptuous period of her existence is the historical illustration of society resting upon a materialistic foundation. Is our civilization a reproduction of Babylon? If so, the sooner the handwriting appears on the wall the better it will be for the good of the world and the future of the

race. Apparently, the materialistic ideal is the dominant force in American life to-day. If the apparent is a symptom of real disease, is this disease an ill to which the civilization on the western hemisphere will succumb?

If the materialistic ideal represents one side of our modern life, the other side is represented by the Christian ideal. The adjective is chosen advisedly, for it is sufficiently inclusive to represent the finest idealism of the human race. Christianity epitomizes the best for which mankind has struggled through all the centuries; and the sincerity of a person's idealism is his rating as a Christian. John Wesley, after reading the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, confided these words to his diary: "I doubt not but that this is one of these who shall come from the East and West and sit down with Abraham in his kingdom." And who can doubt that had Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Virgil been among those who heard the Sermon on the Mount they would have felt what Nicodemus acknowledged: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God"?

What is this philosophy of life that we call Christianity, this attitude toward the universe which is at once morally exclusive and inclusive? What is Christianity? The question has produced the greatest body of literature, both in quantity and quality, outside of the Bible. Saints and sages have reverently and wisely given themselves to the task of explaining it. Monumental theological treatises like Saint Augustine's City of God, à Kempis's Imitation of Christ, Bishop Butler's Analogy, Martineau's Seat of Authority in Religion; works of poetic genius like Dante's "Inferno," Milton's "Paradise Lost," Browning's "Paracelsus," Lanier's "Crystal," and in our own day Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven"; masterful sermons, from St. Chrysostom's to Horace Bushnell's; hymns with words majestic enough to be sung to the music of the spheres, as Venantius Fortunatus's "Welcome, Happy Morning"; Bernard of Clairvaux's "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts"; Faber's "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"; Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light"; Charles Wesley's "Jesus, Lover of

My Soul" are all efforts made by the most gifted and reverent among the sons of the race to express the depth and height and breadth of the riches of God in Christ. Christianity is a mine of wealth which has never been exhausted by human wisdom. It can neither be defined in words nor confined by creeds and canons.

If the philosophy of the Christian religion is too profound to be sounded by any one mind or one sect, the teachings of Christianity concerning the right attitude of man toward life are unmistakable. Christianity teaches that there are two worlds, the one visible and transient, the other invisible and eternal, and that while man is by nature a citizen of both worlds, his relation to the invisible is primary, and his relation to the visible, though real, is of secondary importance. Christianity does not classify the two worlds as good and evil, but grades them according to their relative values. One is a goodly pearl, the other is a pearl of great price. The spiritual world is the house whose foundations are laid in the unseen and imperishable; the visible is the scaffolding which at best is

of a temporary character. Christianity argues, therefore, that while the scaffolding is important in the building of the house, if a man is wise, he is more concerned with the house than the auxiliary structure. It is an act of wisdom rather than duty to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. A person shows prudence rather than virtue who is incidentally interested in laying up treasures "on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt," but is diligent in laying up treasures in heaven "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." It is self-preservation rather than self-sacrifice to "fear not them which kill the body, . . . but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." To pluck out an offending eye is surgery that saves rather than self-imposed discipline. The rich young ruler who refused to exchange his riches for treasures in heaven was stupid rather than sinful. The use that man has for the visible world is the use that a soldier has for a training camp, a place where he prepares for a realm of activity. A Christian's interest in

the physical is that it should be a means to a greater end. The constructing of a perfect social order on earth is the mission of Christianity in so far as such a consummation assists man in his spiritual development. The kingdom of God on earth for which the Master taught men to pray is the necessary result of people living together in the right way because they have first established their citizenship in heaven. Christianity is not a doctrine of misty otherworldliness but a sane and practical connecting of man with both spheres of his existence. The non-Christian is one who inverts these relations. Jesus was the sanest Man who has ever lived on earth.

Christianity is the counter-ideal of materialism in modern civilization; and its influence in our age, while less objectively conspicuous, is as evident as the influence of the materialistic ideal. Despite the prolonged siege of hostile criticism, the superior scorn of the morally neutral, and the treachery from within its ranks, the church, above all other institutions, philanthropic and humane, is identified with the Christian religion. It is not contended that that church is

a perfect expression of Christianity; its practice is too often far below its professions. But it is significant that it has a place in our social order, a place apparently as secure as the home or the state. Its place is secure because, theoretically at least, it represents the true Christian ideal. An ideal represented by a historical institution which the better element of society insists is indispensable argues a society powerfully influenced by the Christian ideal of life. Beyond denial, Christianity is a vigorous and far-reaching force in our age.

Whether the dominant ideal of the age be materialistic or Christian is an open question. Both of these forces exhibit marked strength. But though we may classify the quality of each ideal, their divergent influences cannot be tabulated with sufficient accuracy to form a conclusion as to their relative strength. Suffice it to say that neither concedes the victory to the other. Each is strongly fortified, each aggressive, each confident of final triumph.

The modern man hears two voices, one saying: "Let us tear down our barns and

build greater ones," the other asking, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The world to-day is the battlefield of Armageddon, where two hostile and irreconcilable forces, after centuries of mobilization, have met in desperate conflict. In this world war there are no neutrals, the lines are clearly drawn, the fight is on. How goes the battle? Watchman, what of the night?

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPER OF THE TIMES

A PROPHECY of the permanent effects on modern life of either the materialistic or Christian ideal would be highly conjectural without previous consideration of the temper of our age. The race, like the individual, has its moods. History is as whimsical as biography. Eventful decades show as great a temperamental variety as the different persons we know. Our age has its mood no less than the days of the French Revolution. Whatever this mood may be, that ideal to which it is most congenial has a strategic advantage over its opponents. If the mood of the age is impartial, then neither materialism nor Christianity occupies an advantageous position, the success of either over the other being dependent upon the relative virility of the contending forces.

As the temper of a person is indicated by the method rather than the nature of his ac-

tions, so the spirit of an age is reflected by the manner rather than the character of its performances. The pulse beat of our times registers a temper of pronounced restlessness. The earth tremor of human unrest is felt by all. The most sanguine of statesmen refuse to see in the newly made map of Europe more than temporary equilibrium. The wheels of industry revolve spasmodically. The ship of state is tossed on the turbulent waters of social unrest. In education the multiformity of ideals is symptomatic of an unfixed standard of mental training, one American university having substituted as a qualification for admission to its courses the quality of untrained intelligence of an applicant in place of prescribed preliminary studies. Even the church, which ought to be a stabilizer of people's moods in uncertain times, has been infected by the general restlessness, and is spending much of its energy in a nervous pursuit after many non-essentials, neglecting "the one thing needful." The world of to-day is uncertain of itself.

The temper of the modern man is an epitome of the universal mood. He is a stranger

to the tranquil philosophy of Saint Paul: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound." "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." Whether abased or "abounding" the individual of contemporary times is discontented with himself. He is busy pulling down his old barns and building larger ones, but his soul is ill at ease, nervously asking, "What lack I yet?" He builds for himself a dwelling place of magnificent proportions, furnishes it with luxurious appointments, and is disillusioned because it does not call out to him: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Mechanical ingenuity has been taxed in the invention of labor-saving devices, but they have failed to ease our yokes of worry or lighten our burdens of care. To-day man moves from place to place with miraculous speed, sailing through the air, rolling over the ground, moving under the sea, and indeed gauging his every activity to the greatest possible rapidity. We work, play, and pray under the whiplash of hurry. But in our reflective moments we face the satirical question of the hero of Bojer's novel The

Great Hunger, "Where are we going that we are in such a hurry?" The modern young man and young woman are over sophisticated, and wonder why life has lost its zest and romance. They hunt for thrills in travel, fantastic amusements, overdone colors, and glaring lights. We loudly boast of our progress and fill the future with ever-enlarging plans, but are uncertain whether our progress means real achievement or a tower of Babel with its confusion of tongues and noisy contentions. The man of to-day is strenuously energetic, thoroughly efficient, eagerly progressive, and very unhappy. He has gained the whole world and is dissatisfied with his possessions.

The cause of this general unrest is not difficult to trace. For one thing, the modern man has broken with the authority of the past, and has accepted no new master. Never were men so contemptuous of authority. Political constitutions, scientific dictums, ethical decalogues, ecclesiastical canons are no longer formidable. The pilots of state refuse to steer by the old harbor lights of historical precedents. Political science has

thrown into the discard many of its fundamental tenets. The air is rent with the strident shouts of factional tongues, each crying, "I am the state." The doctrines of the rights and authority of government, inherited from our forefathers, are being relegated to political museums. Science, widening the horizon of the universe, subdividing matter, discovering new and unsuspected forces, has set the human mind speculating as to the immutability of nature's laws. The Einstein theory of "relativity" is casting suspicion on the supposed changeless element in certain physical laws, hitherto considered fixed or even axiomatic. Physical science, which was wont to sneer at the fallibility of theology, is growing suspicious of its own infallibility.

In the sphere of moral government external authority is decidedly unpopular. The Ten Commandments are subordinated to the individual conscience. Old-fashioned distinctions of right and wrong are considered presumptuous and arbitrary. A contributor to the Fortnightly Review, discussing what he terms "Scientific Sin," argued

that the error of overprizing the truth is quite common, that there are many who seem positively to worship the truth, as if truth were the essence of all goodness, and that the duty of lying is a painful and uncommon duty, yet a duty which had to be seriously considered. A similar attitude toward ethical precepts is expressed by another writer, who contends that morality is a matter of social discipline, and not an inherent principle in nature like the law of gravitation, but a sort of agreement arrived at by nations and communities for the better regulation of their affairs. A code of ethics for commercial convenience is a wide departure from the emphatic, "Thou shalt!" and "Thou shalt not!" of biblical authority. In the moral world the old order has been reversed, the individual conscience being exalted at the expense of inherited moral traditions.

Our age is likewise resentful of authority in religion. Extreme individualism snatches the crown of authority from organized Christianity. Canons, dogmas, doctrines for which emperors once convened councils and kings went to war are received or rejected

with equal facility. Religious beliefs which were once held as fixed and unalterable are regarded as old-fashioned religious clothes, interesting but long since out of date. "The faith once delivered to the saints" was well enough for the saints, but, really, the saints were rather credulous people. In place of the great creeds of the church which tell what God taught men at Bethlehem under the Christmas stars, amid the unspeakable radiance of the transfiguration, under the Olive leaves of Gethsemane, in the heart-breaking hour of Calvary, and in the glory of Easter morning, we have substituted our penny-page philosophies and pink-tea theologies. There was no more pitiable commentary imaginable on the spiritual poverty of modern times than the spectacle of grief-burdened men and women crowding about ouija boards and reverently listening to table-rappings. Having turned his back on the pillar of cloud and fire, the man of to-day is wandering aimlessly in the wilderness. We have mistaken rebellion for independence, and fancy that we are free because we have lost our way. Having broken with the

authority of the past, we are restless, not knowing whither to go. This very uneasiness is the unadmitted confession of a search for a Lord and Master.

The spirit of restlessness is furthered by the obvious superficiality of our age. We have built our houses on the sand and live on the surface of life, hence we are uneasy because the waters are troubled. We move quickly enough, but it is the mobility of light craft in the shallows. Many of our achievements are of colossal proportions, but a colossus with feet of clay. We are more emotional than thoughtful. We have invested so heavily in the material that we are in danger of spiritual bankruptcy. We are ready to indorse any movement wearing the badges of philanthropy and religion, but we lack serious conviction. The late Maud Powell, the brilliant violin virtuoso, referring to successful American workers in the field of art, said: "There are more liveliness and high spirits than of spirituality. We do not live deeply enough. We depend too much on the big outer stimulus to rouse us. We must be turned away

from the things that we possess to a deeper inner life." The inner lights burn dimly, and "If the light within be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Living on the surface of life, we are subject to disturbing surface conditions.

An additional reason for modern uneasiness lies in the fact that ours is a period of rapid and radical transition. In a very real sense every age is an age of transition. History is ever ringing out the old and ringing in the new. Times of peace and tranquillity are changing times no less than years of storm and stress. It is more than a poetic fancy, it is the statement of an inevitable process, that the world moves forever "down the ringing grooves of change." The periods which are designated as normal times are those changes which, like the seasons, take place gradually, imperceptibly, and which give men time for unconscious adjustment. In normal times there is apparently greater political stability, more clearly defined ethical standards, and religion speaks in stronger tones of authority. But the process of change which our age is

undergoing is abrupt and far reaching. We have found ourselves thrust violently into a new and unfamiliar world, a world of strange social forces, new political alignments, untried rules of conduct, unfamiliar religious impulses. The twentieth century is a shocking innovator. It has struck established customs with such an impact that many of the traditional landmarks have been shaken down. There are not wanting prophets who are saying that there is a spirit abroad in the earth, strong, desperate, maddened, which, like Samson, will not stop until it has pulled down the pillars of every time-honored social institution.

Times of transition are times that come to destroy as well as to fulfill. When such times are characterized by changes of kaleidoscopic rapidity the destructive forces are more apparent than the constructive, and for a time more powerful and numerous. When the air is filled with the dust and noise of wrecking machinery, we are inclined to ask, dubiously, "Of this great temple of civilization, shall one stone be left standing upon another?" Ours is a distracted age. The

world mood is one of restlessness and anxiety. Though the causes of this distraction are not too remote to be ascertained, yet the possibilities of such a mood are uncertain. Analysis is surer than prophecy. Even when the symptoms are unmistakable the outcome is problematical. Nature has her surprises which upset all human calculations. Tennyson "dipped into the future far as human eye could see," and the world has witnessed his rhetoric scientifically fulfilled:

> "The heavens filled with shouting,
> And there rained a ghastly dew,
> From the nations airy navies,
> Grappling in the central blue."

But chemistry, steel, electricity furnish surer materials for exact prophecy than does human nature. Long ago the wise and sorrowful Jeremiah confessed himself mystified by the subject, and reached the conclusion that "the heart is deceitful above all things . . . Who can know it?" As there lurks in every person a madman or a philosopher, a saint or a demon, so society is a possible mob or a chivalrous order, a wrecker or a builder,

anarchy or a state, a renegade humanity or a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. When human nature is most uncertain of itself it is most easily influenced. Where conviction is wanting, persuasion has its opportunity. A restless age is a plastic age. The mood of our times has surrendered to neither good nor evil; it presents each with an opportunity for conquest. While it is yet pliable, neither the good nor the evil has the advantage over the other. One may hope, the other may beware.

CHAPTER IV

A DEFINITE TYPE INEVITABLE

The present is a time of indefinite social ideals, flexible moral standards, vague religious faith, and therefore an age of easy tolerance. Any philosophy of life can find a footing, any creed can gain some believers, any puppet prophet can have a hearing, every temple has its worshipers. Like the men of Athens, whom Paul addressed from Mars' Hill, we have set up altars to all the gods, known and unknown. We respond to the winds of all the doctrines which are blowing. We would profit by heeding Carlyle's advice concerning the attempt to appropriate the universe: "Attempt not to swallow it, for thy logical digestion; be thankful, if skillfully planting down this and the other fixed pillar in the chaos, thou prevent it swallowing thee."

Nothing shocks us very much because we are so morally and religiously elastic. Or-

thodoxy and heresy are distinctions which are more imaginary than real. The "defender of the faith" no longer persecutes his heretical brother; he is merely passively interested in what his brother thinks. In human society the radical and the reactionary receive equal consideration; indeed, we are not sure which is which. Innovations interest us; they do not annoy us. The modern man is rarely shocked by moral variations. When he is confronted by an innovation, instead of striking the inflexible body of his convictions and producing a ringing protest, it sinks quietly and without friction into the yielding clay of an easy tolerance. The man of to-day is too ethically pliable to feel the vibration of a jarring impact.

The desirability of tolerance is always conditional. The needful truth for an age is often the truth which that age has forgotten, neglected, or suppressed. When religious ardor is expressed by persecutions, inquisitions, sectarian bigotry, and acrimonious doctrinal battles, the gospel of tolerance is the gospel for the hour. When men

insist that the ascetic life is the only way of salvation and that the soul is in peril whenever the doors of desires are unlocked, then blessed be that truth which leads man forth from dark monastic walls into God's bright world of trees, flowers, love, and sunshine. When religious teachers are most certain that man's knowledge of God is limited to one age and race, or that Christ speaks to the world only over the private wire of a historic incarnation, it is well to think of Paul's words: "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," and to believe that

> "The heathen hands, and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in the darkness,
> And are lifted up and strengthened."

But when bigotry melts into flaccidity, when the sensual supplants the ascetic, when men would tear down all the moral walls of the kingdom of God, and obliterate all ethical and religious distinctions, a gospel of tolerance is not only untimely but positively injurious.

The conditions which make for tolerance

to-day are neither surprising nor unnatural. The present is a dramatically transitional period in modern history, and in the process of swift change from an old to a new order a plastic condition of society is inevitable. The old vessel has been melted, and the molten material has not yet shaped itself into the form of a new vessel. For a while it is soft and pliable, and is responsive to the touch of any force or influence. Our age has not taken a definite shape; it is neither the form of Beelzebub nor the image of an angel; it is shapeless. Out of the plastic stuff the potter's hand of destiny has not yet molded a new and distinct type of civilization. The present has not stiffened into a fixed historical form. This indeterminate state is a cause for anxiety. It gives ground for both hope and fear; hope, because being yet plastic, it may be shaped into the image of the divine; fear, because being still shapeless, it may take the form of evil.

"The rudiments of empire here
Are plastic yet, and warm;
The chaos of a mighty world.
Is rounding into form."

"The chaos of a mighty world" is an opportune phrase. It is very expressive of our great unshaped world to-day. But chaos, however far-reaching and thorough-going, is only momentary. Revolutions play their part and cease to be. After awhile heresies are no longer disturbing; they are either accepted or pass on and are forgotten. The significance of a human upheaval is not in its immediate action but in its ultimate result, not in its cyclonic movements but its permanent influence upon the world life. The surgical operation is incidental in itself, the momentous question is whether the patient succumbs or survives. The discordant notes flung into the air are important only as they are the prelude to the composition which follows. It is the composition that matters; the inharmonious introduction is incidental. Into what kind of harmony will the twentieth-century discords be gathered? A Hymn of Hate, or a Hymn of Praise, a Hallelujah Chorus or a De Profundis? The importance of the present mood of the world is its connection with the future life of the world. Our age of pliable clay must settle

into a distinct and permanent mold. We must soon have a fixed and unalterable place in history. The twentieth century is to be an everlasting monument to something, for better or for worse.

With society, as with the individual, the oft-quoted saying is true, that actions form habits, habits determine character, and character crystallizes into destiny. As the character of a society is the aggregate of the kind of individuals composing it, it behooves the individual to study his own acts and examine his own habits. The effect of the individual life upon social life is of more than passing moment or transient influence. Scientists teach that every noise, that of a falling stone or rippling water, starts wave sounds which reverberate forever. What the modern man is thinking and doing is of incalculable future social consequence. What are we doing? What are we thinking? Whatever it is, we may be assured that it will have its permanent effect in shaping the kind of civilization into which the present age will inevitably settle. Goethe was wont to say: "Be careful, young man, what you

pray for in youth, for you may receive it in old age." In this youth time of a new era it is well that we know what we seek in our task of reconstructing the world. Things are in the making, and if when civilization has assumed permanent form it is less graceful than we hoped, our regrets will be unavailing, like Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." We need not be deceived into feeling that our acts and thoughts are of momentary importance, or that our lives are unrelated to human life as a whole. No man liveth or dieth unto himself. Each hand has some part in shaping the world. Writing of the degradation of French national life which followed the reign of Louis XV, Carlyle argues that its causes were not primarily that of Philosophism which destroyed religion, not Turgot, not Necker, not the Queen's "want of etiquette," but "every scoundrel that had lived, and quack-like pretends to be doing, and been only

eating and misdoing, in all provinces of life, Shoeblack or as Sovereign Lord, each in his degree, from the time of Charlemagne and earlier. All this (for be sure no falsehood perishes, but is as seed sown out to grow) has been storing itself for thousands of years; and now the account day has come. . . . O my brother, be not thou a Quack. Die rather, if thou wilt take counsel; 'tis dying once, and thou art quit of it forever."

Into what form will the future crystallize the plasticity of the present? Will it return to some former type of civilization, or will it be something hitherto untried and unknown? Among the rife prophecies are the following: An international political order will be created, a sort of superstate with its armies and navies policing the world, and maintaining law and order. People will develop along national lines as before—although patriotism is at a low ebb just now. Our existing political institutions will be overthrown, and the world ruled by the proletariat. Moral traditions and restrictions will be thrown to the winds, and humanity will suffer the calamity of social atavism.

There are other prophets, who either seeing clearer or hoping better, feel that there might be a return to something like Puritanism. Dr. Parkes Cadman has tentatively expressed such an opinion. "If democracy," he says, "simply dissolves the multitudes into individuals to collect them again into mobs, I predict that Cromwellian Puritanism will once more become fashionable."[1] But mob violence is not sufficiently prevalent or disturbing to produce such political reaction. It is to be hoped, however, that our profligate conduct may react in the direction of the Puritan code of ethics. Sickened of sated appetites and overfed senses, people may turn in disgust from their tropical abandonment of feelings, and seek the purer if sterner uplands of austere living. The Puritan ideal is not the Christian ideal; it is nearer John the Baptist than Jesus, but our age is as foreign to Jesus as to John. The Puritan ideal, with its inflexible Sabbath, its hostility to laughter and song, its stern suppression of desires, bleak and frigid as it was, is preferable to the orgies of prodigality

[1] From a report in The Brooklyn Eagle, by permission.

witnessed to-day on every hand. The Puritan is to be desired above the twentieth-century man-of-the world. The camel hair and wild honey of the wilderness is a finer moral environment than the court of Solomon.

There are churchmen who think that they can see signs of an approaching civilization with religion as its predominant force. The belief may be born of hope, for the religious situation is too complex to hazard a safe prophecy. There is much religious activity and little religious thinking in the church to-day. There are mergers, movements, and organization enough, but religious seriousness and depth of feeling are not so evident. Among the more thoughtful there is a pronounced interest and a certain wistful yearning for spiritual realities. Such are seeking after God "if haply they may find him." Can it be that we are on the threshold of a distinctively religious age? Such a consummation is devoutly to be wished. A religious age, however imperfect the expression of religion may be, is more desirable than a nonreligious age. A religious age is always an age of serious living. Men are

never so much in earnest as when most religious.

Unless the pliant world life of modern times resolves itself into a civilization profoundly influenced by a divine purpose, it will be clay grotesquely marred by blind and purposeless forces. If after all the centuries of man's tenure of earth, after all the stern experiences of the race, after all the lessons which the past has tried to teach, we are not nearer a superior social order, humanity might with good reason despair of itself. Surely, man has lived long enough in this world to begin to learn to live well. We have been so busy demanding our rights from our fellow men that we have forgotten that ours is a spiritual lineage. Less insistence upon our rights as human beings, and a clearer realization of the dignity of divine sonship is a need of our age. True progressive social evolution is toward a theocracy rather than toward a democracy. The people need to hear the voice of God more than the world needs to hear the voice of the people.

Whether or not a distinctively Christian

era is an early prospect depends largely upon two factors, the degree of the modern man's interest in religion and the ability of Christianity to capitalize that interest. If there is a point of contact between Christianity and the man of to-day, it is in whatever interest in religion that man might have. If man is "incorrigibly religious," it is equally true that he is spasmodically religious. Circumstances condition a person's susceptibility to religious influences. When bereft of earthly happiness the human heart turns to religion for compensation.

Since its beginning Christianity has found disciples among the poor, the sorrowful, the outcasts, the world-broken. The message which Jesus sent to John the Baptist in the fortress of Machærus explains the cause of the popularity of Christianity among the victims of life's battles: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." The religious message which can say with authority, "Come unto me, all

ye who labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest," will always find followers. Nevertheless, the class of people to whom religion is primarily a refuge from the storms of mortal existence is not the most influential class of society. Where the religious interest of man is aroused only by hardships and sorrow the human area for the operation of Christianity is too restricted and uncertain to permeate the whole of society. There is a deal of truth in the statement that the history of a people is the history of her great men. Humanity walks in the footsteps of its leaders, and the leaders are not creatures easily broken by adversity. Those whom others instinctively follow are by nature too self-assertive and resourceful for their religious instincts to be stimulated by misfortune. Such natures usually grapple with and overcome their troubles or accept them philosophically rather than seek relief in religious faith.

The religious interests of vigorous personalities capable of molding human sentiment arise from other and deeper causes than personal affliction. Ian Maclaren said

that if you would have a cause succeed, do not defend it in books, but link it up with a great personality and it will be successful. Every sweeping revolution, every epochal movement is associated with the names of commanding figures. The Reformation must needs have its Luther and its Melanchthon; Puritanism its Cromwell and its Milton; Methodism begins with its Wesleys. "An institution," writes Emerson, "is the lengthened shadow of a great man." The weak and unresisting never hold an influential place in human society. The champions of early Christianity were men of tremendous virility and exceptional gifts. Among the twelve apostles there were leaders of unusual natural endowments and native strength of character. In the chosen three, Peter, James, and John, was embodied dynamic power which under the necessary stimulus would have made itself felt in any age and among all classes. Peter's masterful presence, impassioned fervor, and generalship in dealing with men would have made him a conspicuous figure in any arena of public life. James's practical sagacity,

his organizing ability, and fine tact rate him as a potential commercial genius. The philosophical intellect of Saint John places him in the front rank of the great thinkers of the race. Gentile Christianity received a tremendous impetus in being championed by that many-sided genius the man of Tarsus. That early Christianity advanced with such conquering power was to no small degree due to the fact that many of the greatest men of the first and second centuries consecrated their genius to the propagation of the new faith. Great causes demand great leaders. Great leaders demand great causes to champion.

For the past half century the pulpit has been preaching the gospel of service and the mission of Christianity to the poor. Lazarus begging crumbs from the rich man's table has occupied the frontispiece of modern theology. We have almost come to think of the Christian religion exclusively as an uplift movement. Despite the unquestionable claim which unfortunate humanity has upon the ministry of a "cup of cold water," there is no historic or ethical reason in limiting

Christianity to a class religion. Christianity has been retarded as a powerful force in society because the church in these later days has neglected to make disciples of those who are in need neither of material assistance nor hygienic enlightenment. The time is at hand when the church must face the question, "What is the message of the Christian religion to the strong?" The fittest are the sculptors or the iconoclasts of civilization. Puny hands neither destroy nor build. If the near future is to witness the overthrow of ancient institutions, the destruction will be the work of cyclonic forces. If a new age shall behold a Christian civilization shaped out of the mass of present conditions, it will largely be the work of consecrated power and dedicated genius.

CHAPTER V

IS CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION PRACTICAL?

Is human society capable of being Christianized? Can the leopard change his spots? Is there an angel of Christian civilization hidden beneath the unpromising exterior of the social life of man, or is the material too gross to be refined by the lofty idealism of the Man of Galilee? Does the Christian religion offer salvation to the individual only? Is the relation of man to man essentially too complicated to be solved by the simplicity and beauty of the gospel precepts?

That there have been true Christians in the world since the days that Jesus walked the earth is beyond question, people who have reproduced within their limitations the life of the Master. Among those who have written their names in Christlike characters on the honor roll of the centuries are apostles like Paul, monks like John of Damascus,

kings like Alfred the Great, statesmen like Gladstone, soldiers like Robert E. Lee and General O. O. Howard, preachers like Phillips Brooks, and a countless host of men and women unknown to fame whose hearts burned within them as they walked with Christ life's pilgrim way. Such are our real superiors, for whom earth owes heaven its boundless gratitude.

"We thank Thee for each mighty one
Through whom the living light hath shone;
And for each humble soul and sweet
That lights to heaven our wandering feet."[1]

Christ has succeeded marvelously with the individual. "Jesus never failed but once with the individual," said the author of Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush; "that was with Pilate. He never succeeded in public but once; that was when he was crucified." The individual with whom Jesus has succeeded has not been primarily a product of his social environment. Some have lived at war with their age like Savonarola and

[1] Richard Watson Gilder in The Methodist Hymnal. By permission of The Methodist Book Concern.

Wesley; others have detached themselves from society and lived in monasteries, like Saint Bernard of Clairvaux; all have been conspicuous, their very goodness shining in gleaming contrast to the dingy social ideals amid which they passed their days.

The twentieth century is an ethical improvement on that in which the first disciples were as sheep among wolves. But the man who went down to Jericho was not the last person to fall among thieves. The brigands who beat and robbed him were more primitive in their methods, but not different in their principles from the modern profiteer. The prodigal son was not the last social parasite. The manner of his life in the "far country" is reproduced in thousands of useless lives to-day; and uselessness is among the worst of social crimes. Class hatred and special privilege are as unchristian to-day as when the Great Teacher flung his terrific denunciations into the faces of the astonished scribes and Pharisees. If present-day society were to be transformed overnight into a Christian civilization, it would be so unlike anything we have experienced that it would

be like living in a new world in company with a new order of humanity.

The following elementary tests may reasonably be applied as conditions governing a possible Christian civilization. Human society is Christian:

(*a*) Where the interrelation of social units, as states or nations, is of reciprocal helpfulness.

(*b*) Where the attitude of the social unit —the controlling powers of the state—to the individual is that of impartial justice and opportunity.

(*c*) Where the majority of individuals composing the social unit maintain brotherly relations one with another. Society functioning under these conditions would be the widest possible departure from any known social standard. Such society would presuppose, for one thing, international Christianity, a real brotherhood of nations. From the viewpoint of known social standards nothing could be more revolutionary. The relation of man to man would be radically altered. But Christianity as the law of society has never been enacted in the Parlia-

ment of Man, never seriously considered in the Federation of the world. A city wherein dwelleth righteousness is an experiment which has never yet succeeded on earth. The geography of the New Jerusalem is of a paradise which is yet to materialize.

The Christian religion is a simplifying process. It reorganizes individual character around two simple, uncompromising motives: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . , and thy neighbor as thyself." But the practical application of the simplicity of Christ's teachings to a problem as intricate as is modern society is fraught with perplexing difficulties. We live in a network of human relationships. Each man is many kinds of men; he is a father, a son, a citizen, a buyer, a seller, a competitor, a producer, a consumer. Is it possible to Christianize all of these relationships? Can government be at once efficient and Christian? Can business be both Christian and practical? Is the gospel of the Nazarene antagonistic to the law of self-preservation? What are the statistics of the strange paradox, "He that loseth his life

shall find it"? The task of Christianizing society lies not so much in its human difficulty as in its practicability. The question is not, "Is it hard to do?" but "Can it be done?" If its difficulty were the sole obstacle, the task of Christianizing society would be relatively simple. The challenge of the difficult is one which appeals to dauntless human nature. If it is a mountain range, human skill will tunnel under it. If it is an ocean of wind and wave, man's ingenuity and daring plow through or sail over it. If it is the undiscovered poles of the earth, the very dangers lure adventurous spirits to the white stillness of those far frozen zones. If it is a cause dear to his heart, man marches unflinching through fire and blood to attain it. If the Christianizing of society is solely a difficulty, be it ever so great, the day will dawn on earth when society will acknowledge the right of the Hero of the Gospels to say: "Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am."

It is on the sole assumption that the Christian regeneration of society is a difficulty rather than an impossibility that the subject

merits any discussion whatever. If it is an impossibility, the question had best be closed, and the champions of the Christian religion be content to see individual Christian characters growing in the world but not of the world, like lovely flowers blooming in drear places. If the transforming power of the Christian religion is limited to the conversion of the individual here and there, monasticism is the most logical means to the end. But if a Christian civilization is a possibility, such hypothesis is a standing challenge to every Christian, be its consummation ever so remote and its achievement ever so difficult.

A possible Christian civilization must rest upon certain indispensable principles, the omission of any one of which precludes the possibility of insuring its achievement. The amenability of humanity as society to the social principles of Jesus is a primary condition to its social rebirth. The achievement is unthinkable unless the interrelationship of man with his fellow man can be controlled by the spirit of Jesus Christ. In his De Civitate Dei, Saint Augustine says:

"Two loves have built two cities: love of self, or the egotism that issues in blindness and contempt of God, built the earthly city; the love of God and the ideal urged to the point of self-sacrifice raised the celestial city . . . The two societies are respectively that of the idealist and altruist and that of the egotists." These two fundamentally different ideals of society, under varying forms, have competed throughout history for the possession of the world, and though the competition still goes forward, the later city has apparently ever been the stronger. Plato speaks as the voice of human experience in all ages when he declares that "the ideal city is nowhere on earth."

"The egotism that issues in blindness," which has built "the earthly city," is the same spirit which has raised barriers of hatred and jealousy between nations. The more enlightened nations may indignantly disavow the unscrupulous statecraft of Machiavelli, but the international policy of each state is in principle Machiavellian. "Our fatherland must be defended by glory or by shame," he asserted. "When her safety is

at stake there must be no consideration of injustice, of pity or of mercy, of shame or of honor; we must put aside all else and follow whatever course may conduce to her life and freedom." This is a genuine expression of conventional patriotism. But by no dexterity of New Testament exegesis can Machiavellian statesmanship be squared with the teaching of Jesus. Such is not rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but the selling of soul and body to Cæsar. Can it be questioned that the foreign policies of the nations of the world to-day are more Machiavellian than Christian? M. D. Petrie, in the Hibbert Journal (April, 1920), discusses the question in unequivocal language: "Can any one seriously maintain that the counsels of Christian perfection could be adopted as state maxims? Greece and Rome had their War Gods as well as their War Lords; Christianity knows none such. The great law of disinterestedness, of self-abandonment, of life for others—can it find a place in sound politics? Could the gospel be used as a manual of statecraft? Could any statesman allow himself the luxury of loving

a rival state as his own?"[1] These are considerations which cannot be evaded on the plea of national self preservation. Until the gospel is used as a manual of statecraft, until Christianity is allowed to assume the political and social responsibility as well as the spiritual responsibility of man, a Christian civilization is a misnomer.

The eyes of optimism see the silver lining to the political storm clouds hovering over the world. Aristotle said that man was a "political animal." Some observers note increasing signs that this "political animal" is becoming dissatisfied with the political situation which he has created. It is apparent that, despite the political and social bedlam of the modern world, despite its jealousies and rivalries, the peoples of the earth are tiring of the old social order. What they are anticipating may be nothing more tangible than some vague theory of economic betterment or political equity. But signs are not wanting that the heart of humanity is forsaking its old idols of political rivalries and social tyrannies. There is an unmistakable

[1] By permission of The Hibbert Journal.

world-weariness which is indicative of a prevalent desire for a more idealistic form of social life. If—and there seems to be reason for such hope—"the city of self or egotism" is losing its hold on mankind, the time may not be remote when the "political animal" will welcome international Christianity, not as a new and wider political alliance, but as a super-state ideal, a kingdom of God on earth, a mandate of humanity.

The realization of a Christian civilization is conditioned upon divine authority in addition to human susceptibility. If Jesus did not intend that society should be Christianized, there is small likelihood of Christianity ever becoming the realized ideal of a civilization. Human achievements do not transcend divine purposes. The unbiased student of Christian ethics cannot but see that Jesus longed for a perfect social order to be established on earth. What other meaning can possibly be attached to the petition: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"? Jesus did not formulate methods to accomplish this end—methods change with changing conditions—but his

purpose is unmistakable. The world was loathsome with corruption; he wanted it purified, so he told his disciples that they were to be "the salt of the earth." The world was in darkness; he yearned for its illumination, so he taught his followers to be "the light of the world." Society was without moral guidance; so he impressed upon his converts their moral opportunity, saying "A city set on the hill cannot be hid." He regarded all mankind as the potential subjects of his kingdom, so he sent his disciples as his ambassadors to the Gentile world, with the command: "Go ye into all the world, and make disciples of all nations." Any scheme of Christianity which does not contemplate the Christianizing of society is a partial understanding and an abortive carrying out of the program of Jesus. The conversion of society into a Christian civilization has the unmistakable authority of the teachings and purpose of Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus announced that he came not to bring peace into the world but a sword. Whenever that sword flashed it struck some social sin of his times—extor-

tionate taxation, "burdens grievous to be borne," the tyranny of caste in religion. When we feel his indignation kindling to the white heat of wrath, it is in his denunciation of the "whited sepulchers" whose sins were the crimes of social injustice, the Pharisees who tithed "mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and omitted judgment," the lawyers who took away "the key of knowledge," the fools who made clean the "outside of the cup," but withheld alms from the deserving poor. It is not to be supposed that Jesus's arraignment of the scribes and Pharisees is limited to the men to whom he spoke, or that the system of which they were the products is one of isolated and exceptional wickedness. Christ's denunciation of the sins of his contemporaries is his condemnation of wrong human relationships in every age. It is his official order for a general offensive for all times against all fronts where social sins are entrenched. The Son of man was the relentless enemy of all institutions built on "man's inhumanity to man." Christianity, if it be loyal to its Founder, can never sheathe the sword until all social wrongs are slain.

The destructive mission of Jesus was preliminary to his constructive work. He destroyed in order that he might fulfill. His constructive program was to build humanity into a social order which he could approve and call his own. His ideal of society he set forth in the phrase, "The kingdom of God." This ideal was not a remote, unearthly city gleaming in some "fair dawn beyond the gate of death." It was an institution to be set up on the earth. Though conceived in heaven, it was to be established on earth. Its inspiration was spiritual but its structure was to be necessarily political. It was to be eternal in quality but of a temporal benefit to man. The best qualified interpreters of Jesus's teachings so understood the meaning of the "kingdom of God." The redemption of the world into a better social order is expressed by Peter's phrase "a kingdom of priests," by Saint John's majestic figure of "a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," by the stately language of Athanasius, "a holy season lasting the whole year round, a temple confined only to the limits of the

habitable world, a priesthood coextensive with the human race."

A further condition in the Christianizing of society is the hypothetical virility of the Christian religion. Is the Christian religion powerful enough to shape human society into a civilization distinctively Christian? Its progress is equitable enough, its laws just enough, its precepts idealistic enough, its divine authority is sufficiently emphatic if carried out to build an ideal social organization out of human material. But is the ideal which was born amid the hills of Galilee strong enough to master human nature? Can the Pierced Hand rule this world? Can the Voice that blessed, also command and be obeyed? Is Christianity as virile as it is holy? The Herald of Asia, a secular Tokyo paper, which is regarded as the semiofficial organ of the Mikado's government, has expressed its disappointment at Japanese Christianity. "For the first twenty or thirty years," this journal says, "Christianity was highly respected though not formally welcomed. . . . The new faith is losing its grip on the national mind. It is too spineless to

command the attention of a virile people like the Japanese." This editorial merits consideration in that it reflects the official attitude of the most aggressive nation of the Orient toward our faith. If it is true that our religion is "too spineless" to challenge the interest of the people in the land of Nippon, there is scant hope of its commanding the allegiance of any people. From the viewpoint of Christ the religious situation in America is but little more encouraging than the alleged status of Japanese Christianity. Approximately, one-half of the people of the United States are either members of or are affiliated with the church. If these fifty million Americans were in truth Christians, the kingdom of God would be established on the western hemisphere within twelve months. But the preponderance of these church people are not Christians; numbers of them bear not the slightest resemblance to the Man of Galilee. Light passing through an opaque medium glows dimly, and the light of the cross shining through our humanity is all but dissipated. The truth cannot be evaded that Christianity as the major-

ity of church members live it is too ineffectual to shape society into any real semblance of a Christian civilization. No influence is more impotent than half-hearted religious faith. The Christian religion is powerful only when it is the supreme motive in the life of its adherents. When it occupies a subordinate place it is a weak and futile thing. Unless its disciples seek first "the kingdom of God and his righteousness," the faith which they profess makes little impression on the non-professing. The Nazarene imposes a stern discipline upon all who would follow him. The conventional Christianity of the church which requires of the communicants only donations and attendance upon worship is a pale pretense of obeying the words of Jesus: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." A disciple of Jesus cannot wield the power of the cross until he has first felt the weight of the cross. Not until the first converts left their boats and nets were they commissioned as fishers of men. Not until Simon Peter bowed before the supremacy of the person of Christ was he

intrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Not until the disciples had surrendered their dreams of a place in an earthly kingdom and asked for the last time the question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" did they hear Christ saying to them, "All power is given unto you in heaven and on earth." Not until the fiery pupil of Gamaliel had surrendered to the Vision of the Damascus road, asking "What wilt thou have me do?" was he sent for as a chosen vessel to the Gentile world.

There is not one "spineless" element in the teachings, the discipline, or the nature of the Founder of our faith. Men who have been most thoroughly captivated by Jesus have impressed the world by the reckless heroism of their lives. Others "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Christianity was not supine in the days when a few Jewish peasants defied the hostility of their countrymen who sat in the seats of the mighty. Christianity was something more than a harmless superstition when the sands of the Roman arenas drank the blood of

martyrs, and the funeral flames of burning Christians were the weird torches which lighted Nero's festival gardens. Christianity was not an inert sentiment when official Rome capitulated before the heralds of the cross. Christianity was most formidable in the days when it suffered the severest persecutions. When religion is most positive it creates passionate devotion or meets with fierce opposition. When it is negative it is tolerated or ignored. The phenomenal growth of early Christianity was mainly due to three causes: (*a*) The zeal of the early disciples, (*b*) their singleness of purpose, (*c*) the conscious need of the world for spiritual reality. This zeal was born of devotion to the person of Christ; the program was to win converts from the pagan religions; the readiness of the people to receive the gospel arose from their lack of any other satisfactory scheme for the present life or any promise of life in the world to come.

If Christianity succeeds in accomplishing the hitherto unaccomplished task of permeating society, its champions will be zealots as well as interpreters. The Christianity that

wins the modern world must of necessity be an impassioned religious crusade. Not as an eclectic philosophy, or as a tolerated institution of respectable society can "the faith once delivered to the saints" fulfill its mission in changing the life of mankind. A passionless faith is an impotent faith. If Christianity in modern times permeates the life of the people, it must first be revitalized. Modern Christianity needs to feel the glow of an inner flame to make itself felt. Only one motive is capable of supplying the needed inspiration—a renewal of devotion to the Christ who is the same to-day, yesterday, and forever. This is the sole authoritative motive of Christian inspiration. In this sense the Christianity of to-day needs to imitate the Christianity of the first century. Christianity as our age knows it will inevitably fail, be it ever so well organized, unless its ardor is constantly fed by the presence of Him who says to men in all ages who are willing to listen to him: "Lo, I am with you always." The gospel has no power to inspire save in the realism of the eternal Christ.

Early Christianity was a proselyting

faith. Its activity was chiefly expressed in winning recruits from the pagan world. The program of the early church was almost exclusively individualistic, that is, to persuade a person to forsake the altars of pagan deities, acknowledge the divinity, Saviourhood and Lordship of Jesus, and accept the rite of baptism. Groups of these converts became Christian churches. The churches, when first organized, had no thought of attempting to reconstruct the Roman empire into a Christian civilization. An ideal social order was contrary both to their expectation and their desire. Their aim was not to make the world a better place in which to live, but to make men better by detaching them from the world. Primitive Christianity was not primarily a social gospel. First-century Christianity lived in an age when a slave was the chattel of his owner, but the literature of the early church contains no abolition sentiments. On the contrary, we hear Paul urging slaves to be in subjection to their masters. This indifference to or acceptance of social evils was largely due to the feeling among the early Christians that the end of

the world was near, and that there was little need of trying to mend a machine which would soon fall to pieces.

The task of Christianity in our times, though not essentially different from the task of first-century Christianity, is vastly more difficult and comprehensive. The dominant nations of the world to-day are nominally Christian nations. In the most enlightened sections of the modern world theoretical Christianity is the religion of the most influential people. The church experiences little difficulty in adding to its membership; but the great mission of Christianity to-day is not primarily that of increasing the membership of the church. Social regeneration is the essential need of the times. It is certain that human life will continue on this planet for innumerable years to come. The end of man's tenure of earth is too remote to be imagined. Few seriously believe that it is the divine plan to consume the earth and its inhabitants in a sudden spectacular conflagration. "The individual withers, but the race is more and more." As Christianity is meant to include the entire area of

human life, it is obviously within its program to improve all human relations, to reconstruct humanity into a better society than we know. An interpretation of the religion of Christ which has no social applications is an incomplete interpretation. Christianity will not have finished its work on earth until human society has been rebuilt on the principles of Jesus, until the Golden Rule is substituted for the rule of gold, and the Golden Age succeeds the age of gold. The task which challenges Christianity to-day is that of making society distinctively Christian as it has made multitudes of individuals Christlike.

The widespread and ceaseless social turmoil of our times is a confession in confused tongues by our humanity that society as the world has always known it has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. True, many old demons have been exorcised from society, but their expulsion has too often left the house empty. Christian social ideals must replace these exorcised evils, lest the demons, returning with their strength recruited, take full possession of the house and

thus make the social life of modern times seven fold more demoniacal than before. The modern world presents Christianity with mighty difficulties, and therefore with great opportunities.

Human life is suffering from a deep-seated and malignant disease, and there is no other Name under heaven whereby it can be saved. Jesus Christ is the only hope for our distracted world. Personal piety is not rooted in social iniquity. It is Christianity which demands the kingdom of God in this world. It is Christianity which must make men feel that there is no difference in the highwayman outside the pale of the law and the robber within the law. It is Christianity which can make men realize that their relation to their fellow men is an obligation, rather than an opportunity for exploitation. It is Christianity which can make men see that idleness is parasitism, and that parasitism is shameless dishonesty. It is Christianity which can make men know that no work is of worth which does not contribute to the sum-total of human good. Christianity, and Christianity only, can build out

of the jungle of hate, greed, and coarse indulgence a city of refined taste, a city of brotherly love, a city of ethical beauty, the City of God. At the beginning of the World War there were cynical stylists who informed the race that Christianity had collapsed and the church would hereafter have merely a museum interest to the man of to-day. Subsequent events have emphasized the truth of Oscar Wilde's definition of the cynic: "A man who knows the price of everything and the worth of nothing." Since the day of Pentecost the church, by its abounding energy and ever-widening scope of activity, has been defeating hostile criticism, silencing prophets of pessimism, and vindicating the wisdom of the just Gamaliel: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." The deathless vitality of the Christian religion demonstrates that "the mystery of godliness" is the survival of the fittest in all ages. Twentieth-century civilization, though displaying much confused thinking, distorted morality, nause-

ous cant, and vulgar greed, is feeling the effect of powerful forces working for righteousness. The joint missionary campaign recently inaugurated by the two branches of Episcopal Methodism in America was one of the most far-reaching and significant movements in Christian history. The Centenary Movement, with its splendid audacity, demanding of church members the consecration of wealth and life, was a declaration by militant Methodism that the security of the homeland lies not in socialized Christianity but in Christianized society, that the camp fires of foreign missions which have been bravely burning against the night skies of paganism for more than one hundred years shall be replenished and multiplied until every tongue has confessed and every knee bowed to the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ. Inspired by the same lofty motives, other churches are waging vigorous warfare against social evils and building up the waste places at home and abroad. The New Era movement in the Presbyterian Church, the educational and missionary movements in the Baptist denomination, the fine zeal for

service shown by organizations like the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew in the Episcopal Communion mean that the Church of God is seeing with clearer eyes the vision of its opportunities and is seriously feeling the weight of its world-wide obligation. While such enterprises have necessarily moved along the lines of denominational activity, the spirit of good fellowship and helpfulness has waxed stronger among Protestant churches. Whatever criticism, merited or unmerited, of the machinery of the lapsed Interchurch Movement, the motive of this effort was a sincere desire for Christian unity, a worthy motive which will express itself again and again until denominational jealousies shall be as remotely unthinkable as the burning of witches and the thumbscrews of the Spanish Inquisition. The hope of the race is in the triumph of righteousness, the triumph of righteousness is in the strength of the church, the strength of the church is the abiding presence of Him in whose companionship we feel our hearts strangely warmed.

37918

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANITY THE WAY OF PROGRESS

Progress is a condition of life. As such, it is as essential as it is desirable. Ours is a progressive age. "Forward!" is the watchword. We live in advanced times; all who would not be stragglers must keep step with the onward movements. The world demands that men keep abreast of the times. Let the devil take the hindermost! Useless hindermost! The way our fathers lived is too slow to suit their children. To-day has scant respect for yesterday. We are an enterprising, inventive, efficient people. Behold the works of our hands and brains! We have made of electricity a servant as Prospero did of Ariel. It lights us, warms us, rides us, cooks for us, prints for us, executes criminals for us. A thousand mechanical devices perform the work rapidly and accurately which brawn and muscle once did slowly and crudely. When our forefathers settled on

this continent, the process of demand and supply was the simple one of getting what they needed from the soil and the forest. With the vast increase of population the problem became exceedingly complicated; but it has been solved by the system of modern commerce. The size, intricacy, complexity, and efficiency of the modern commercial machine is a marvel. A person may dine on the products of the sea which he has never seen, eat the bread from fields which he has never tilled, and sell goods which he has never possessed.

We have systematized and applied the knowledge with which science has furnished us. Biology, chemistry, physics, geology, medicine have made our world more intelligible, human life safer and more comfortable, enabled men to walk the earth less by faith and more by sight, banished many ills to which the human flesh is heir, and robbed the grave of many a premature and unfair victory. In short, the road from the cradle to the grave has been graded, lighted, smoothed, and made easier than the rough way our fathers trod. Ours is a progressive

age. Who can question it? Sociology too has won its laurels in helping humanity. Social science has healed many gaping wounds in the body of society. Hospitals, asylums reformatories no longer permit the unfortunate to die by the roadside or the maniac to scream among the tombs. Despite a World War through which we have recently passed, we flatter ourselves that the conduct of the twentieth-century individual is on a higher ethical plane than that of the man of a generation or two ago. Reforms have moved forward on a wide front. A number of iniquitous customs have been outlawed. The saloon is a memory. Social respectability has driven vice into the byways and dark alleys. An aroused public conscience is lifting the misplaced burdens from the shoulders of little children. Enlightened public opinion demands compulsory education, and rightfully takes from irresponsible parents the power to keep their offspring in ignorance. Judged by statistics and financial reports, the race is making wonderful ethical strides. We are an enlightened, competent, forward-looking people, and we are vastly

pleased with our achievements. We have diligently sought success in the fields of commerce and physical science, and we have found it. We have moved forward with amazing celerity along these lines. Our achievements are all but commensurate with our aspirations. Verily, we have our reward!

Who would maintain that the material equipment of our age is less desirable than the rude furniture of the past? We would not exchange the conveniences and comforts of to-day for the inconveniences and hardships of yesterday. We prefer the electric light to the tallow dip, railway trains to the stagecoach, the motor car to saddlebags, the newspaper to the town-crier, paved roads to the mountain trail. To utilize the resources of the earth is the right and privilege of man. "God giveth us all things richly to enjoy." Each discovery, each invention is nature yielding her secrets to those who knock at her doors, and it doth not yet appear what new marvel the future will reveal. Along the way of things desirable our civilization has traveled fast and far.

In certain phases of human conduct the present has profited by the mistakes of the past, though our ethical progress is far behind our material advancement. The application of social science to economic maladjustments and vicious institutions is our usual way of measuring our moral progress. There is an obvious though a doubtless unconscious tendency to estimate the value of ethics in terms of commercial results. The measure of moral progress is no less the ethical quality of the motive by which it is inspired than the desirable physical results achieved. Men do not gather figs of thistles. The argument that prohibition is a good business investment has no higher moral standing than the argument that the saloon is a good business investment. If a hospital is built *solely* for the purpose of protecting the healthy against disease of which the sick are the foci, it is as ethical to kill the sick in some painless manner as to segregate them in isolated wards. If churches and schools and beneficent laws have only a practical value, they indicate material rather than ethical progress. Nevertheless, a sane op-

timism is justified in believing that the morally imperative mood of our age is at least partially responsible for good laws and humane institutions. Surely, a feeling that intemperance is a wrong use of life is a deeper cause for a saloonless nation than other considerations. Surely, wise and merciful legal statutes are the expression of a real desire for justice and kindliness rather than a demand for expediency. Surely, asylums and rescue homes are born of pity in the hearts of the people rather than a demand for self-protection. If it be true that genuine altruism rather than disguised selfishness is bringing to pass those things that make human life cleaner, more orderly, better controlled, more carefully conserved, our age, though its most notable achievements are material, still has much ethical accomplishment to its credit.

Progress, in modern times, though it has been conspicuous in many important fields, is barely perceptible in others. The advance has been on an uneven front, and at some points there has been no advance at all. Judging by results, our age pays scant

homage to the culture of the soul, and refuses to believe that religion is "the chief concern of mortals here below." Many there are who consider the religious life highly desirable or even important, but not primarily essential. Therein they confess their gross stupidity and reveal a nature that is of the earth earthy. True religion has no legitimate place in the life of man unless it be the first place. There is a Something in human nature which we call "The Soul." It is this Something which has driven man from the jungles to civilization, and at rare intervals has brought him to what Carlyle called "The edge of the Infinite." When the soul's wings are weakest man drops back into the muck and mire of animalism. The light of religious faith has never been completely extinguished since the human race began its long climb upward. Occasionally it has burned fitfully, the storms have threatened it, and at times it has come perilously near to fading out. But in the vast temple of humanity, built of meanness and magnificence, there have always been vestal spirits who kept the fire glowing on the altar. The tem-

ple of humanity shines in splendor, or is shadowed in gloom as the light on the altar of religion is bright or dim. Man is most sublime when he is on a spiritual quest. The paths that have been made by men who have followed the gleam are the world's truest highways. The essential contributions to human welfare are religious contributions. Isaiah, Saint John, Thomas Aquinas, Saint Francis, Luther, Wesley, represent the indispensable men of the race.

Religious progress is the essential line of progress. Ibsen believed that man's chief work is his soul. The indispensable structure which man builds is his spiritual edifice. All else is scaffolding which must fall away when its usefulness is ended, a temporary building which has no place in the universe save as a means to an end. To reverse the position of the primary and the secondary is to disregard the logic of life and incur the penalty of hopeless confusion. The wisest of all teachers declared that it was inexcusable folly to seek material progress at the expense of spiritual loss. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world

and lose his own soul?" It is man in an irrational relation to the universe.

The failure of the sum-total of modern man's achievements is his phenomenal success in acquiring the world and his desultory interest in his soul. Our chief work has not been the soul. "At present we all instinctively consider the work of man's hands more lasting than the man himself," said William Butler Yeats in a recent interview, to a representative of *The New York Times:* "Our education, our political institutions, our economics, are naturally occupied with making the handiwork more efficient. We want to make the man a good laborer or a good clerk or a good professor . . . But establish that the personality itself will outlive all its handiwork, even though the handiwork might have been the pyramids, the main object of all politics and all our economics will be the perfection of the personality itself."[1]

The progress of the modern world lacks uniformity. It shows elements of strength and elements of weakness. It has gone forward here and retreated or marked time

[1]By permission of New York Times.

there. Its area is irregular, its boundary uneven like the map of a country. True progress is uniform expansion like the widening of a circle which retains its circular identity. On the map of modern civilization spiritual geography occupies a real but very limited area. Our Galilees and Olivets are discernible but obscure. Institutions of materialism have monopolized human interest. Commercial acumen is a quality which finds a readier market than the vision of the prophet. The promise of loaves and fishes receives greater consideration than the warning that man cannot live by bread alone. The luxury which wealth gives seems more desirable than the peace which the world cannot give. Had our spiritual life kept pace with our material advancement, the attendant sorrows of the war would not have caused bewildered men and distracted women to commit the pitiful folly of seeking solace for grief in the shallows of necromancy.

The popularity of the ouija board was a shameless confession of our spiritual poverty. The recent epidemic of spiritualism in

England and America was the distressing spectacle of human nature in desperate need of the support of spiritual religion, yet unequipped with religious experience—a condition which either drives man into the swamps of animal excesses or sends him into a mental wilderness in quest of some will-o'-the wisp of superstition. For the modern man, the World War was Gethsemane without the strengthening presence of the angel of God.

The world of to-day is filled with commercial giants and spiritual pigmies. "The foregoing generations," wrote Emerson in words that are as applicable to our times as to his, "beheld God and nature face to face; we through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should we not have a poetry and a philosophy of insight instead of traditions, and religion by revelation to us and not the history of theirs? Why should we grope among the dry bones of its faded wardrobe?" Why not, indeed? Why not for man to-day an "original relation to the universe" as well as for the author of the fourth Gospel? Why

not for twentieth-century America a religion of revelation as well as for first-century Galilee? Why not for the seeker of truth to-day an experience as vivid and compelling as that which befell the man of Tarsus? God does not confine himself to one group, nor limit his activities to one historical epoch. The elect of God are those who elect to seek God if haply they may find him. The chosen people have always been those people whose first choice was God. Pentecosts are for those who anywhere and at any time are willing to wait until power is given them from on high. What a luminous era our age might have been, if, as the heirs of all the ages, our chief pursuit had been after spiritual riches. Had we been true to our spiritual heritage we would know more to-day of the meaning of God in Christ than the disciples who followed him in the days of his flesh. It was our privilege to have known the meaning of his words, "Greater works than these shall you do, because I go to my Father." What signals might have been flashing from the Jerusalem which is above! What profound openings into the mystery

of life and death might have been vouchsafed us! What transfigurations we might have beheld! Our human pilgrimage instead of being so much of the journey a Via Dolorosa might have been an Emmaus way, where our hearts burned within us through the consciousness of the mystic presence which hallows the universe. If we had given the consideration to the kingdom within which we have bestowed upon the kingdom without, even in these far-off days the heart of man could say:

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He,
And faith hath yet its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

"The healing of the seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

Christianity, social or individual, demands symmetrical development. The gospel of the Galilaean issues orders to advance simultaneously on all fronts. By this test, our boasted modern civilization, though not anti-Christian, is at best sub-Christian, a civiliza-

tion whose material achievements are out of all proportion to its spiritual development. While medical science has traveled far beyond Hippocrates and Galen; while astronomy has widened the skies of Galileo; while the statutory laws have banished many social evils; while chemistry and physics have made the lore of Middle Ages appear as crude guesses, the twentieth-century preacher is still the pupil of the first-century apostle. No subsequent treatise on Christian theology is in any degree comparable in spiritual appreciation to the Pauline Epistles. Saint Paul has no successor of equal magnitude. A handful of Jews are the spiritual teachers of twenty centuries. After the passing of two thousand years the best that Christian theology has done is to try to explain what the first disciples thought of Jesus of Nazareth. Historically this was to be expected but not experientially. A fact may be located in time but the experiences, implications, and applications of the fact are timeless. A historic revelation of God does not postulate a Deity whose principal interest and activity are in the past. The Holy Spirit is dynamic,

not static. A continuous and progressive revelation is for those who have eyes to see and wills to know.

Dr. Tyrrell, in his very suggestive book Christianity at the Cross-Roads,[1] argues that "we forget that every new comfort is a new necessity, a new source of discontent and unhappiness, and leaves the relative proportion of happiness and misery unaffected." Expelled at one place, the tide of sorrow breaks through in another; *expellas furca tamen usque recurret.* Shall progress ever wipe away the tears from all eyes? Can it ever extinguish love, heal pride, tame ambition, and all their attendant woes? It is not enough to give a man bread for his body and knowledge for his mind. Prolong life as we may, can progress conquer death? And even given the attainment of its facile dreams, can progress postpone the day when mankind shall be blotted off the face of the universe that will go its way as if he had never been?

What justification is there for progress which is merely utilitarian? If progress

[1] Longmans, Green & Co., Publishers.

means the increase of humanitarianism and the growth of science, at best it serves but as the palliative of a human sorrow which it cannot diminish. When limited to the sphere of the practical, progress is the great illusion of human life. The soul of man cries out for the bread of life, and a practical progress feeds him the stones of physical achievements. Christianity is the only complete definition of progress. True progress is Christian growth. Our civilization is in the testing. It has but to continue in the way in which it is going to become diminishingly Christian. To become increasingly Christian a radical change of course is obligatory. We must be born again! It is imperative that we transfer our energies from the material to the spiritual side of life and emphasize those things which we have too long neglected and leave to a subordinate place those interests which have monopolized our attention. The world has been too much with us. If during the next decade man could be persuaded to spend less time in physical laboratories and more time in the contemplation of the hidden beauties of na-

ture, less time with the crowds and more with himself, less time with machinery and more time under the stars, less time in physical equipment and more in the culture of the soul, less time with the world and more time with God, less time in the courts of Mammon and more at the feet of the Great Teacher, less time in manual dexterity and more in prayer, then indeed would we have a record of progress of which the modern world might justly boast. We have experimented with everything except Christianity. We have exhibited every ideal save the Christian ideal. We have obeyed every master save the Master of right living. The time is at hand when we must heed him, or forfeit our spiritual birthright. Then:

"Hushed be the noise and strife of the schools,
Volume and pamphlet, sermon and speech,
The lips of the wise and the prattle of fools—
Let the Son of Man teach!

"Who has the key to the future but He?
Who can unravel the knots in the skein?
We have groaned and have travailed and sought to be free.
We have travailed in vain.

"Bewildered, dejected and prone to despair,
To Him as at first we turn and beseech:
Our ears are all open! Give heed to our prayer!
Oh, Son of Man, teach!"[1]

[1] "The School of Christ," by William F. McDowell. By permission of the Fleming H. Revell Publishing Company.

CHAPTER VII

THE DIVINE RIGHT OF THE CHURCH

The term "Christian civilization" has not been employed in this discussion as a synonym of a perfect state of society, but an expression of a condition of society which as a whole is more largely controlled by Christian ideals than by other influences. As such, a Christian civilization would be the supreme achievement of humanity. Should the twentieth century become Christian to the same degree that the Jews under the judges sought to obey Jehovah's will, or that the age of Pericles was artistic, or the era of the Cæsars imperialistic, the accomplishment would be man's utmost triumph. It would eclipse the most glorious periods in all the annals of the peoples of the earth. The twentieth century as a Christian civilization would be the Golden Age of history.

Under the scepter of the Christian civili-

zation people's habits would be altered and their attitude towards life reversed. Industrial warfare would be impossible, public officials would regard their oath of office as sacramental, profiteering would be unknown, public amusement would be free of vulgarity, the ethics of the business world would not permit of exploitation by unreasonable profits, people would seek to learn the will of heaven more than the decalogue of mode, the non-churchman and the nominal churchman would be regarded as suspicious characters. What a strange, new world this would be! Most of us would fit awkwardly into it, as the man in the parable who went to the wedding supper without a wedding garment. The Christianity of our age is little more than a thin veneer, crude human nature covered with the varnish of Christian traditions.

And yet a Christian civilization is by no means inconceivable. Why should it be unworkable? Jesus dreamed of such a racial achievement when He spoke of drawing all men unto himself. Why should it be thought a thing impossible that one age might be-

come as peculiarly Christian as others have been literary, or scientific, or commercial. Why may not the spiritual in man predominate as the intellectual, political, or decorative has done? In individuals the spiritual has frequently been uppermost, why not in groups? There is as much potential divinity in humanity as there are other elements.

By what means can a possible Christian civilization be brought to pass? It will not arrive suddenly, nor be ushered in by some unusual or spectacular display of supernatural power. Jesus taught that the growth of his kingdom would be gradual, almost imperceptible, like that of vegetation: "First the seed, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." When the people demanded of him a sign from heaven, He refused the request and answered with a rebuke. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. . . . No sign shall be given you." Men are not made better by being spectators of the marvelous. Many who witnessed the miracles of Jesus were not redeemed. Thousands ate the bread which he miraculously supplied, and then went back

and walked no more with him. Nicodemus was impressed, but not converted. Others who could not deny what they saw said that Jesus was in league with Beelzebub. When a sorcerer saw Peter performing miracles of healing, the necromancer was not redeemed, but evinced a keen interest in the apostle's gifts from a commercial motive. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the Master declared that the miraculous was of little value as a convincing argument, that even a phenomenon as startling as a man risen from the dead would not alter the stubborn will of man. Men are not redeemed by witnessing inexplicable phenomena. Regeneration means other than the gratifying of stimulated curiosity. Herbert Spencer said that ideas do not govern or overthrow the world, but that "The world is governed or overthrown by feelings to which ideas serve only as guides." This is a literal contradiction of his own logic; the guide is obviously more responsible for the consequences than the impulse which demands guidance. With a deeper insight Emerson wrote, "The key to every man is his thought." Quinet stated

that his chief object in writing his Génie des Religions was to show "how entirely each of the civilizations was the offspring of a religious dogma." "If you wish to alter the destiny of a people," declared Père Felix, a great French preacher, "you have only to alter its ideas." As a man thinketh in his heart so is he! If our age is to see the birth of a Christian civilization, it will be the reign of certain ideas. Christian education is the *sine qua non* of a Christian civilization. But ideas which rule master while they educate. A compelling force inspires as well as instructs.

Is there an existing institution capable of both instruction and inspiration? Truth requires an objective agent. What will be the agent of a possible Christian civilization? In the past great men have been the agents of truth. God is cautious; he shares his secrets with those who value them. God introduces himself to the race through the medium of great personalities. When truth takes possession of a group an institution is born. The institution carries out the ideas transmitted to it through the individual.

The record of an institution is, as Lamartine said of history, "Neither more nor less than biography on a large scale." It may rightfully be said that God delegates institutions to work out the plans which he has given to the race through exceptional persons. If a Christian civilization is to be, its agent will be an institution.

What institution is qualified for the task of Christianizing the modern world? Is there in the world to-day a single institution carrying with it sufficient force, authority, and historical significance to be the builder of a civilization ruled by the ideas of Jesus Christ? In his introduction to the French Revolution Carlyle pauses to pay his tribute of respect and reverence to the church: "Observe that of man's whole terrestrial possessions and attainments, unspeakably the noblest are his symbols, divine or divine-seeming, under which he marches and fights with victorious assurance in the life battle; what we call his Realized Ideals. Of which realized Ideals, omitting the rest, consider only these two: his church or spiritual Guidance; his kingship, or temporal one. The

church! What a word was there; richer than Golconda and the treasures of the world! In the heart of the remotest mountains rises the little kirk; the Dead all slumbering round it, under their white memorial stones, in hope of a happy resurrection: —dull wert thou, O Reader, if never in any hour—say of moaning midnight, when such a kirk hung spectral in the sky, and Being was as if swallowed up of Darkness—it spake to the things unspeakable, that went to thy soul's soul. Strong was he that had a church, what we call a church: he stood thereby though in the center of Immensities, in the conflux of eternities, yet noble toward God and man; the vague, shoreless universe had become for him a firm city, and dwelling which he knew. Well might men prize their Credo, and raise stateliest temples for it, and reverenced Hierarchies, and give the tithe of their substance; it is worth living for and dying for."

The church is the officially appointed and divinely ordained commissioner of the Christian religion. In the sixteenth chapter of Saint Matthew is the record not of pontifical spiritual authority bestowed upon a per-

son, but of the church's divine commission: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The historical significance of the Christian Church is tremendously impressive. Its historical origin is as definite as it is majestic; it begins with God manifesting himself in a historical character, Jesus of Nazereth. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The church was born of a union of heaven with earth at a given date, and in a geographical place. By contact with earth and time, its origin is rescued from the mists of the indefinite. It is not the fruit of great men's thought and dreams like Buddhism. Its conception is divine; its founder said, "I and the Father are one." The church is his-

torically qualified as the maker of Christian civilization.

The broad inclusiveness of the church makes its possible membership coextensive with humanity. Its Founder was a Jew, but the church knows no racial limits. Its birthplace was amid the Palestinian hills, but the church transcends all national and geographical boundaries. Its temples lift their spires under all skies; its faith is confessed in every tongue. Its birthday is in the first century, but its anniversaries are without end. The scope of its discipleship is unlimited. What other institution has a program as broad and as inspiring as the commission: "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations . . . "? Jesus Christ is the one universal Man, and his church the one universal institution. The world is the parish of the church.

The Church of Christ is as democratic as it is comprehensive. The doors are open to all, but each must enter through some one door. There is no private entrance into the church. "He that entereth not in at the door, the same is a thief and a robber." "I

am the door." Over each door leading into the church is the invisible inscription: "There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved."

The vitality of the church springs from a source of perpetual life. The church is not a memorial to Jesus Christ. A memorial perpetuates the memory of the dead. The church is not a monument sacred to the memory of a dead Christ. Membership in the church is not an expression for a grave "in a lone Syrian town," but allegiance to a living person, "One Jesus, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." The church is not a society existing merely for the purpose of learning what a great Teacher once said, but a school for learning what that Teacher is saying to-day. It is not an organization formed around an abstract idea, but an organism fed from living ideas. The motive for its achievements is not conquest for the pride of conquest, but devotion to a Person. All results are the fruits of its personal inspiration: "Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep."

The church has a unique place in history

as the peculiar creation of Jesus. It is the sole institution for which he is directly responsible. He rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, but he is not the creator of the state. He talked with and listened to the doctors, but schools existed long before his day. He sanctified marriage and blessed the home, but he is not the founder of the home. The church is uniquely and exclusively Christian in its origin. In the beautiful metaphor "The Bride of Christ," Paul expresses Christ's exclusive proprietorship of the church. It is the only institution to which Christ applied the possessive pronoun. He declared, "I will build my church." The church is nonexistent unless it is exclusively Christian. The most convincing evidence of Jesus Christ to the world is the church. When Jesus departed from the world he left orders to build a Christian civilization on this earth, and the sole agency which he left to accomplish this end was the church. "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If the sublime temple of a Christian civilization ever adorns the earth, the church will be its

architect and builder. Doubtless there are genuine Christians outside the pale of the militant church, persons who through environment, training, temperament, or accident are not communicants of Christian bodies but who are earnestly following out the words of Jesus, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But unless there are more churchmen who are Christians than there are Christians who are nonchurchmen, the church is in an embarrassing defensive position. Nor is the churchless Christian more justified in holding aloof from the church than is the Christian churchman in assuming sole proprietorship of all Christian truth and goodness. Logically, the terms "Christian" and "churchman" should not have essentially different meanings. To believe in Christianity and not believe in the church is similar to believing in good citizenship without a government.

If the church fulfills its mission in Christianizing human society, it must needs emphasize the essentials of its commission, and throw away the incumbrances with which the

errors and blindness of men have loaded it. It must gird on the whole armor of faith and lay aside every weight that impedes it. A catalogue of the positive and negative needs of the church would be an immeasurable list. But there are some changes in the church which are compelling and immediate. For once and all the church must cast aside the worldly measurements of success. Jesus constantly taught that the standards of success in his kingdom were not those of the world. Whenever the church has forgotten these things it has invariably suffered as a spiritual power.

The restoration of the church to its ancient dignity is of utmost necessity. The church is not a mendicant supported by almsgiving. Communicants should be made to feel that their financial support of the church is the sanest investment that they can possibly make. The rightful dignity of the church is likewise lowered when it becomes a sycophant, begging for members. The church should open its doors to all who willingly accept the conditions of membership, but it should cease to be a beggar for recruits.

Sycophancy is never so repugnant as when wearing the robes of religion. Jesus invited men to follow him, but he never bowed to any man in order to make a disciple. There was one who voluntarily offered to follow him whithersoever he would go, but Jesus deliberately scared him away with a gloomy picture. Jesus knocks at the doors of human hearts, but he never forces himself within.

Men should not be permitted to think that they are bestowing an honor on the church when they take its vows. Church membership is a privilege conferred, not a favor granted. "We have exchanged," said Bishop Henry C. Potter, "the Washingtonian dignity for the Jeffersonian simplicity, which was in truth only another name for the Jeffersonian vulgarity."[1] A similar criticism may justly be made of some churches. We have exchanged cathedral dignity for clubhouse informality, which is only another name for irreverence. Men are not impressed by a religion whose institutions are unimpressive.

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[1] From an address at Washington Centennial Service in Saint Paul's Chapel, New York, April 30, 1889. By permission of Little, Brown & Company.

A revival of religion in the world would be promoted by a revival of reverence in the church. Reverence is the rightful attitude of the human towards the divine.

Between the church and the world a distinct line needs to be drawn. Until society is Christian the position of the church in the world is, "The church of God in Corinth," and not the Corinthian church. This line must not be obliterated by the church taking on the color of the world as the salamander assumes the color of the object on which it rests, but only as society tends to grow more Christlike. Jesus told his disciples that they were different. "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." This is not an unpractical attitude. James wrote his epistle to serve as a practical guide to conduct, but he is careful to define religion as a duty to the fatherless and widows, and a strict obligation of keeping oneself "unspotted from the world." The church has lost more influence from its laxity than from its blue laws. Men respect and reverence an ideal which demands self-abnegation. "What do ye more than others?" is a question which the

membership of the church cannot lightly ignore. "What Christianity," wrote the great German preacher Christlieb, "in her antagonism with every form of unbelief most needs is holy living." Holy living within the church will go further toward purifying the social life of the world than all legislative reforms enacted in the parliaments of men. The regeneration of the church will be the cleansing of the foundation which will purify all the streams of human society.

"O, for a living faith in a living Redeemer!" cried Richard Fuller. The church in our day is not a house "left desolate," it is an unhappy house in which can be heard the suppressed cries: "O, for the recovery of a lost Hope! O, for a bright gleam of a fading Faith! O, for a renewed acquaintance with the forgotten Christ!" The most compelling need of the modern church is a return to the apostolic faith in Christ and the recovery of a lost vision for the realities of the unseen world. Who can question the truth of Dr. Lyman Abbott's statement that "The hope of the church is a return to the mystical faith of Paul in the invisible world of the spirit,

and the passionate devotion of Paul for the unseen Christ." Historical research has acknowledged the unique place of Jesus of Nazareth in the annals of the race, art has portrayed the Son of Mary as the "fairest among ten thousand and the One altogether lovely"; ethics has bowed to the Man of Galilee as the wisest teacher of morals; the wisdom of the world has theoretically recognized his supremacy and said, "Never man spake as this Man"; the science of human relationships admits the beneficent influence of the Nazarene upon political and economic institutions; idealism concedes to the Man of Sorrows the first place on the roll of heroes and martyrs; but the Christ of to-day is One who is seen against the background of the past or known impersonally by the proxy of his influence upon our civilization.

Scientific research and philosophical speculation have been unable to dethrone Jesus. Intellectual pride has admitted his unique relation to God and confessed: "Surely this man was the Son of God." Doctrinal fallibility is not the sin of the church. On the whole, Christian theology is in intellectual

accord with Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Altars to strange gods have rarely been set up by ecclesiastical Christianity. Intellectual loyalty to the Son of God has been the sheet-anchor of the church in the days when science was deifying physical laws. The faith of our fathers has been little affected by cults which have grown up about imaginary divinities. Count Zinzendorf, when a lad of ten years, listening to a learned discussion at his grandfather's table on first causes, cried: "Even if they do discover other gods, I am for Herr Jesus." The church has tenaciously held to this attitude when science has sneered and philosophy questioned. But the intellectual assent to Christian doctrine cannot meet the necessity of mystic communion with a Divine Companion. The immediate and compelling obligation of the church to our age is expressed by Dr. Joseph Fort Newton in a luminous sentence in his volume, The Eternal Christ: "Here is the message of the church—to make the Eternal Christ real and eloquent to men—and by the sign it will

conquer."[1] More than all besides the church in the twentieth century needs an experience which will enable it to say, "And Christ stood in the midst."

> Lord Jesus, if in these far-off days, Thou art standing in our midst and our eyes are holden that we see thee not, lift the darkness from about us, that we may behold thee in the beauty of thy holiness and in the holiness of thy beauty! Ours is the Emmaus way of twilight faith in which we walk sorrowfully alone; join thyself to us, that our hearts may burn within us in the way! We are very poor because the many things which fill our days leave so little room for the one thing needful; help us to clear our lives of rubbish and fill them with riches which wax not old! Teach us that the Pearl of Great Price is obtained by the surrender of many goodly pearls! We have learned much about the world in which we live, but our souls are ill at ease; and now we would learn of thee! Far and long we have gone in search of the knowledge which enriches the mind and leaves the heart hungry; teach us more of Thee!

[1] By permission of The Fleming H. Revell Publishing Company.

Thou art the Way; show us the way lest we stumble and fall! Thou art the Truth; reveal thyself to us, lest in our blindness we follow after error! Thou art the life; restore to us the Easter gladness of thy Living Presence! Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven! Amen!

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